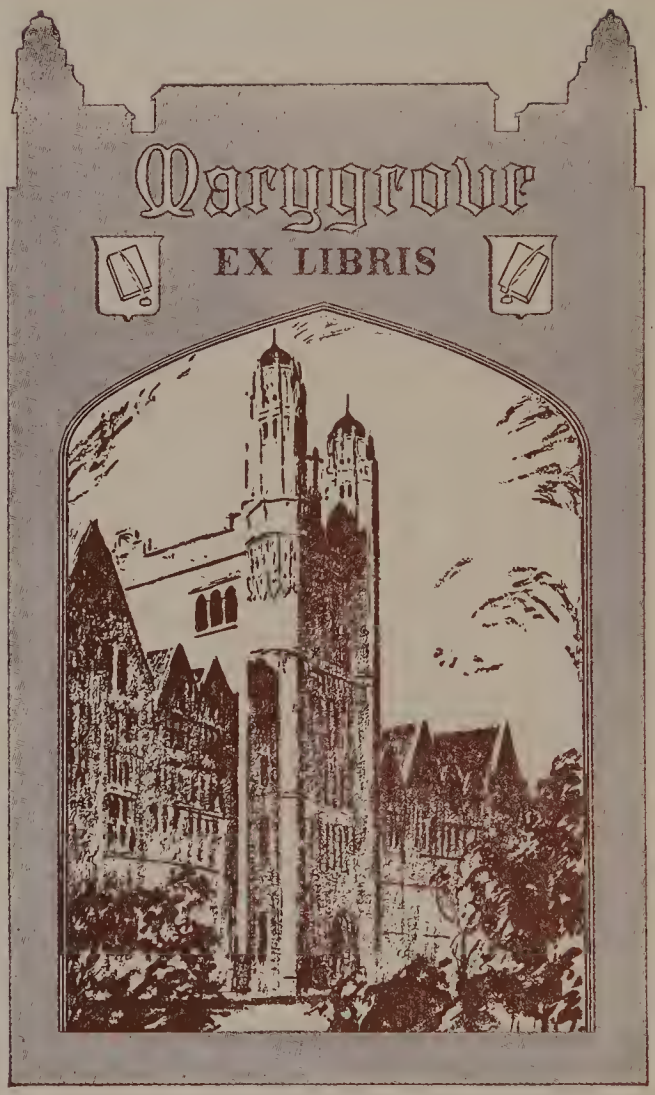
Porches and Portals of Old Fredericksburg, Virginia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Porches and Portals

OF

Old Fredericksburg Virginia

VIRGINIA CARMICHAEL

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Porches and Portals

OF

Old Fredericksburg, Virginia

Introduction

IF for a moment we could evoke the spirits of the men who played such a vital part in history making in America, and who at different periods entered the porches and passed through the doorways of Fredericksburg's old homes, what a magnificent pageant of heroes, warriors, presidents and statesmen it would be!

But even in the days when "porches" in America were an unknown quantity and "doorways" mere openings in Indian wigwams, the first prominent figure in Colonial pioneer life — Captain John Smith — sailed up the Rappahannock River in 1608, a little past the present site of the town; and when hostilities between the doughty Rappahannocs and Smith's party had ceased, the pipe of peace was smoked in the shadow of these Indian portals, which poetically, if not architecturally, might be termed Fredericksburg's first doorways.

The beginning, however, of anything which could be really dignified with the name of a door, crude as it was, starts with the disappearance of the

Indian from the banks of the Rappahannock and the settlement of the white man in his stead. In 1671 Sir William Berkeley granted a tract of land to Thomas Royston and John Buckner, "the said land being due, by and for, the transport of forty persons into the Colony."

This settlement, known as the "Leaseland," was the earliest beginning of Fredericksburg, and though every vestige of it has disappeared, a little stretch of the imagination enables us to reconstruct those crude lonely cabins, whose doors were slabs of wood, hand hewn from the forest trees, hung on iron hinges and closed by heavy wooden bars. From an architectural standpoint these doors are of little value, but the human interest in them must always hold. Little slabs of wood between those dauntless settlers and the stalking terrors of the forest!

Exclusive of the Leaseland period the evolution of Fredericksburg's doorways might be said to cover a period of not much more than a hundred years, beginning or rather following the date of 1727 (at which time Fredericksburg was made a town by law, and named for Frederick, father of George III) and continuing through and a little beyond the first quarter of the nineteenth century, during which period they reached the zenith of their beauty.

But it is our purpose to touch on Fredericksburg's doorways from a human and intimate standpoint rather than an architectural one, and from this angle there is an abundance of material; for with every period of the town's growth, through peace

and prosperity, through fire and sword, Destiny has ever directed the footsteps of great men, and of men with outstanding personalities, to Fredericksburg's doors.

Fifty-six years after its beginning the Leaseland was merged into the town which was christened Fredericksburg, and the streets named for members of the royal family. By authority of the Virginia Assembly fifty acres were laid out in streets and lots, "the Lots not exceeding half an acre," and to be sold at the rate of forty shillings an acre. Two years after the sale of said lots, houses were to be built upon them, "of Brick, Stone or Wood, well framed, of the Dimensions of Twenty Feet square and nine Feet Pitch, or at least apportionate thereto." From which law it will be seen how modest and simple was Fredericksburg's architectural beginning, and how correspondingly plain must have been the doorways of the first dwellings.

But even with such handsome inducements as lots for 40 shillings and building requirements modest in the extreme, the little town for the first years of its existence grew slowly; the reason being that in Virginia the plantations had from the start been the center of all the social and most of the business life of the Colony—as late as 1700 Williamsburg was the only town in Virginia, and for a time the Colony seemed entirely satisfied with this state of affairs. Then gradually the planters, many of whom were Burgesses, realizing the necessity of urban life for the good of the Colony, made towns by law, with the expectation that they would be lived in by the tradesmen. For themselves—

far be it from them to give up the independent life of the country gentleman for the restrictions of town!

But viewpoints change, and soon after Fredericksburg began its growth a few of the landed gentry decided to try town life for themselves; so that close on the heels, and contemporary with some of the first small town dwellings, came the larger Colonial homes with their beautiful doorways and porches.

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These little houses along the banks of the Rappahannock belong to the picturesque days of the sailing vessel, and Fredericksburg's youth.

Among the Early Homes of Fredericksburg

We know of no home standing now which was built in the actual date of 1727, but here and there through the town, and particularly along the river bank, are a few little brick homes which are "apportionate" to the 1727 specifications, and which were probably built by the tradesmen, to whom the Burgesses were offering "large privileges and immunities" for living in the towns. The illustration shows two of them, which, like Ann Hathaway's cottage, are built with their gable ends set to the street.

All of these houses along the river bank suffered cruelly during General Burnside's shelling of the town in 1862. Their backs face the heights across the river from which the bombardment came, and in many instances shells passed entirely through them, ripping off front and back doors and leaving little but the walls standing.

Passing along the river street not long ago with two strangers in Fredericksburg, one of them stopped and scrutinized these little houses with the greatest interest. Evidently there was something about them that gave her imagination wing. "How perfectly adorable they must have been when Fredericksburg was young!" she exclaimed. "Of course that huge cellar was a storing place for hogsheads of tobacco waiting to be shipped to the Old World—with the shipping wharf probably near the foot of the garden; and the tiny windows were

Built about 1745 by Colonel Charles Dick. Colonel Dick was one of the commissioners of the first Gunnery of the Revolution which was established in Fredericksburg as early as 1775. The porch is a copy of the porch at Mount Vernon.

hung with painted calico curtains; and the kitchen had a sea-chest, and split bottomed chairs and a corner cupboard; and think," turning to her friend, "of the different footsteps that have worn a path from the river to the old door at the back of the house."

The friend smiled and shook her head, "I'm not good at taking the lyrical view, you know."

"Then you should never, never come to Fredericksburg," solemnly said the lady with the imagination.

We all laughed and drove off to the part of the town where the landed gentry began to build their homes when they decided to try town life for themselves.

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The Charles Dick House

Near the corner of Lewis and Princess Anne Streets is a simple rambling old house which is one of the oldest residences in Fredericksburg. The first deed for the lot on which the house stands, after the laying out of the town, was from trustees and Feoffees of Fredericksburg to Thomas Turner, of King George county. After changing hands several times the lot was bought by Colonel Charles Dick, who is said to have built the present house in 1745. Colonel Dick (with George Washington's brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis) established the first gunnery of the Revolution in Fredericksburg, which was turning out small arms as early as December, 1775.

The garden door and porch of Kenmore, home of Betty Washington Lewis, only sister of George Washington. In days gone by a box-bordered walk led from the porch steps to the Mary Washington House, a short distance away.

The place, which has passed through many changes and alterations, was owned for a number of years by Mr. John W. Masters, and during his ownership the old house responded graciously to the care and thought bestowed upon it. Old lines were undisturbed, and additions made in accordance with the Colonial simplicity of the house. The present door (time and weather having rendered the original one unfit for use) and the large delightful porch, so like that at Mt. Vernon, were added by Mr. Masters. But the old doorway, with its diamond framed transom, belongs to the days when Colonel Dick was writing to Thomas Jefferson, then Governor of Virginia, that "the gentlemen of this town, and even the ladies, have spiritedly attended at the Gunnery and assisted to make up already about twenty thousand cartridges with bullets with which the Spottsylvania militia and the militia from Caroline are supplied."

Sitting back from the street on a lawn shaded by ivy covered trees and pink crepe myrtle bushes, the old place is one of the most charming in Fredericksburg.

It is now owned by Mrs. Edwin Gibson.

§

Kenmore

Kenmore, built in 1752 by Fielding Lewis, to whom we have referred, for his wife, Betty, the only sister of George Washington, has stood for a hundred and seventy years as an example of all that is stately and beautiful in Southern Colonial

Interior Doorway at Kenmore between the hall and the great room. A portrait of Colonel Lewis hangs on the wall, and above the door is seen a portion of the decorated ceiling.

architecture. The house is built on land which was surveyed by George Washington, but the once large estate has been divided and sub-divided into dwelling lots which have encroached close to the mansion until there remains of the original eight hundred and fifty acres only the old flower-scented garden.

The bricks for the house were made by Colonel Lewis' slaves, the wood was seasoned from the primeval forest, and Hessian prisoners, held during the Revolution, decorated the walls and ceilings in stucco work of exquisite design.

In entering the house from the west side one is immediately impressed by the large double doorway which leads from the entrance hall to the great room at the rear of the house. The richly carved framework of the door with its fluted pilasters and semi-oval transom adds an unusual touch of dignity and beauty to the whole lower floor.

The outside door on the east of the house, through which so many Washingtons have come and gone, is simple in design, its two most interesting features—an enormous brass lock and a heavy oaken bar which rests in iron sockets—being on the inside.

Betty Lewis, snuffing out her candle and climbing into her four poster bed, no doubt felt quite secure knowing that the bars were up and the locks were turned!

This fortress-like door leads on to a porch which is built of sandstone, quarried from the nearby hills, and from this porch in bygone days, a box-bordered

The Rising Sun Tavern was the stopping place for all of Virginia's statesmen prior to the Revolution. There is probably nowhere else in the State a single doorway through which so many great and illustrious men have passed.

walk led to the "Mary Washington House," which is still standing only a few rods away.

Kenmore is now owned by the Kenmore Association of Fredericksburg, and through the efforts of its president, Mrs. Vivian Minor Fleming, and her efficient co-workers interest in the historic mansion has become nation-wide.

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The Rising Sun Tavern

The Rising Sun Tavern on Caroline Street, which was built in 176— by Charles, the brother of George Washington, is a little history in itself. In the stormy days prior to the Revolution it was kept by Weedon, who became a major-general in the Continental army; and because of General Weedon's opposition to the Crown and his fiery and unquenchable utterances in behalf of American liberty, the tavern was spoken of as a "hot bed of rebellion."

All of the leading men of this section of the country passed in and out of the tavern's doorway more than a hundred and fifty years ago; and the brass knocker, so time worn that its carved inscription, "The Rising Sun," is partly obliterated, has resounded to the hand of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Mason, Monroe, Randolph, Marshall, Mercer, John Paul Jones, LaFayette, the famous Lees and other lesser lights upon that stage of long ago.

Porch of the old Carmichael house, once the home of Anne Carmichael, celebrated through the South for her beauty and her charm.

Many a stately minuet has been trod upon its floors; many a pound and shilling lost "at play" beneath its roof; and in the old tap room, who knows how many glasses drained to the cause of American liberty? George Washington on one occasion summed up an evening at the tavern, and his own misfortune at cards in the following laconic words: "Evening at the Rising Sun. Lost money as usual. The boys at Fredericksburg are too smart for me."

In 1824 LaFayette was again a guest beneath the tavern's roof. The old building boasted a ball room in those days (long since burned) and there it was that the nation's guest was brilliantly entertained.

Taken all in all, there is probably not in the whole of Virginia a building more rich in historical interest or a single doorway through which so many great and illustrious men have passed.

The "Rising Sun" is owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

§

The Carmichael House

Fiske, in his *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors*, touching on architecture, says: "The earliest type, the house of greater width than depth, with an outside chimney at each end, is familiar to everyone, at least in pictures. It was characteristic of Virginia . . . and is a slightly modified type of the smaller English manor house of the Tudor period."

Such a description fits the old Carmichael house on Hanover Street. Built in 1780 by Mr. Charles Yates, it was bought soon after its erection by young Dr. James Carmichael, who came over from Scotland in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Generation has succeeded generation in the old home; and the patients of four Drs. Carmichael in continuous succession have worn the stone steps and passed through the door of the little brick office at the right of the house.

One of the most interesting features of the old place is the little Colonial porch, whose peaked roof is supported on the front and rear by Ionic pillars.

Romance is added to the house by the fact that it was once the home of Ann Carmichael, celebrated years ago through the South for her beauty and her charm. There is a portrait of her by Merrill—a little known American artist, but an artist who in this instance has painted beauty as though it were a palpable thing—a young creature alive and warm smiles down upon you from the canvas above the mantel.

From rooms that are furnished with old mahogany and hung with interesting portraits, one passes through the rear doors of the house to a garden typical of other days, with its sun-dial, its ivy-covered walls and squares of old-fashioned flowers. The property is owned by the Misses Ellen Spottswood and Fannie Tucker Carmichael.

The patients of four Doctors Carmichael have worn the stone steps and passed through the door of this little office.

The immortal Washington passed through this doorway for the last time in 1789 when he visited his dying mother.

The Mary Washington House

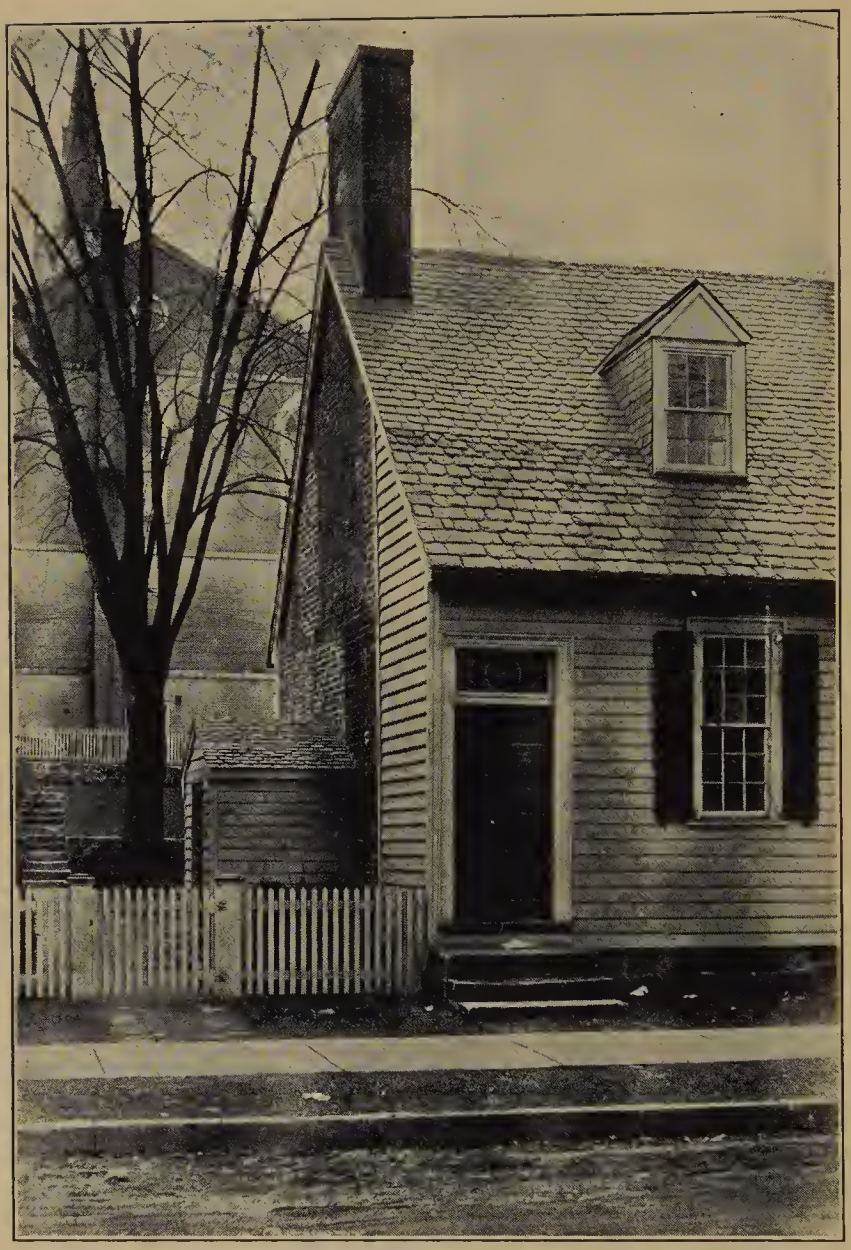
At the corner of Charles and Lewis Streets is a little frame story and a half house, so plain and unpretentious in appearance that, except for its look of age and the great box bushes in the garden, a stranger might pass it by unnoticed.

The entrance to this historic house, which was bought by Washington for his mother about 1775, has no pretentions to beauty. The time-worn stone steps lead to a frame portico, which was added after the days of Mrs. Washington, and the door, with its original bronze knocker, is as plain and unpretentious as the house.

But in spite of its simplicity (perhaps because of it) there is a vast appeal in the little house, and even the hurried American lingers reverently about the quaintly furnished rooms and along the box bordered garden path—the same path which led from the "mother's home" to Kenmore, a hundred and fifty years ago.

It was here in the garden in 1784 that LaFayette found a little old lady, attired in a simple dress and white lawn cap, digging quietly away among her plants and flowers. She welcomed her visitor warmly and invited him into the house to partake of spiced gingerbread and a mint julep.

But the most interesting incident in connection with the little house is Washington's farewell visit to his dying mother just before his inauguration in 1789. Kneeling to receive her blessing, she bade him "go forth and fulfill the destiny which heaven had prepared" for him.



One of the doorways of the Hugh Mercer building. Here Hugh Mercer practiced medicine, and kept an apothecary shop prior to the Revolution.

The property is owned and maintained by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

§

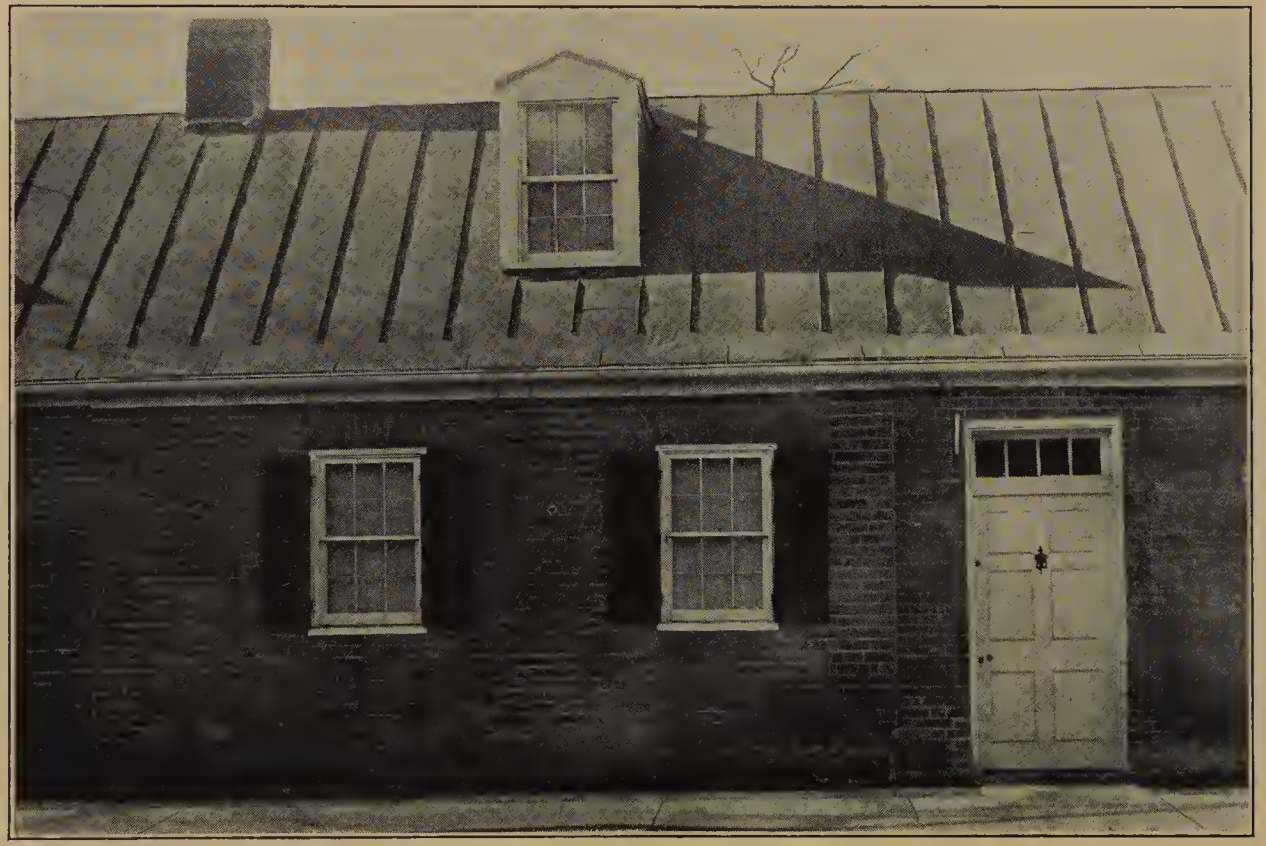
The Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop

Quaintness is the chief charm of the little shop which stands at the corner of Caroline and Amelia Streets—and looking at it one half expects to see a gig or a riding-chair deposit an old-fashioned lady or gentleman—some seeker after health before its door—for Hugh Mercer practiced medicine and kept an Apothecary Shop here for a number of years before the Revolution.

In the early days of the struggle Mercer was elected Colonel of the Third Virginia Regiment, and the doors of the little office closed behind him for the last time when he marched away at the head of his men.

Washington and Mercer became close personal friends during the French and Indian Wars, and it was on Washington's advice that Mercer moved to Fredericksburg from Pennsylvania, where he had first settled when he came over from Scotland. The friendship continued to the day of Mercer's death, and Washington always kept a desk in the shop, where he transacted business when he was in Fredericksburg.

In taking a picture of the doorway at the front of the house one naturally misses the old garden at the rear, with its box bushes and gaily colored



Doorway to the law office of James Monroe.

flower beds—the same garden that no doubt furnished the Apothecary Shop with its thyme and lavender and roses—the leaves of the roses finding their way into big earthern jars to be distilled into rose-water, as was the custom in old apothecary shops.

On Washington Avenue not many blocks from the Shop is a monument to the gallant defender of American Liberties, erected by the Government in 1906.

A local association, The Citizens Guild of Washington's Boyhood Home, now owns this historic property.

§

The Monroe Law Office

Little did the unknown attorney James Monroe, going in and out of his office door, dream to what heights the Star of his Ascendency would rise, and that one hundred and forty years after his occupancy of this small brick building, people would view it with interest and appreciation because he once practiced law within its walls.

Monroe was born near Fredericksburg in Westmoreland county, which is said to be "distinguished above all other counties in Virginia as the birthplace of genius." On this renowned soil not far from Wakefield, the birthplace of Washington, Monroe began his eventful life.

When the Revolution came on, Monroe was one of the young William and Mary students who vol-

Thirty cannon balls passed through the old Wellford house during the bombardment of Fredericksburg. Windows and both front and back doors were battered in and United States Army blankets picked up on the battlefields were used to close the apertures.

unteered and entered the army, greatly distinguishing himself at the Battle of Trenton.

After the war the young attorney (just married to the beautiful Miss Eliza Kortwright) decided to settle in Fredericksburg, and in 1786 he begun the practice of law in the little brick office near the corner of Charles and William Streets. It was while living in Fredericksburg that Monroe was elected one of the town's Councilmen. He was also a property owner, and the quaint frame building which he owned, but never lived in, is still standing. He attended old St. George's Church.

Nothing could therefore seem more fitting than that the building standing in the town so closely associated with Monroe should be converted into a shrine, and this was recently done when it was purchased by Laurence G. Hoes and his brother, Lt. Gouveneur Hoes, great, great grandsons of Monroe, who placed within the little office many of the intimate and priceless possessions that belonged to their illustrious ancestor.

Nowhere in Fredericksburg can one spend an hour more profitably or interestingly than in the Monroe Law Office.

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The Old Wellford House

In these days of restlessness and change, when people are born in hospitals, married in apartments and buried from undertaking establishments, an old

house which has been allied with all the joys and sorrows, the buffetings and adventures and achievements of one family, in direct succession for a hundred and forty years, has a distinction all its own.

In the year 1789 Benj. Hyde joined in deed to Robt. Wellford conveying building erected by him on the corner of Caroline and Pitt Streets. The lot, however, on which the house stood was not "conveyed" at the time and ground rent at 17 pounds, 5 shillings per annum was even paid until 1799 when another deed records the purchase of the lot.

Dr. Wellford first came to Fredericksburg in 1778, bringing with him the following letter from George Washington to William FitzHugh, of Chatham:

Brunswick, N. J., July 6, 1778.

Dear Sir:

Dr. Robt. Wellford, late of the British Army, leaves here for the purpose of settling in Virginia in the town of F'burg, and will have the pleasure of presenting this to you. He is a gentleman highly spoken of in his profession and deserves every countenance and support from us for his great humanity, care and tenderness to the sick and wounded of our Army in captivity, hence I take the liberty of recommending him to your civilities.

I am with sincere regard and affection, dear Sir, your most obedient servant

George Washington

(Mr. Wm. FitzHugh, Esq.)

Young Dr. Wellford (he was only 22 at the time of his coming to Fredericksburg) had no doubt dreamed of returning to England, his native land, when the war was over—but Fate and his own high hand arranged it otherwise. Because of his humanity to the sick and wounded American prisoners

placed in his care, the brutal Hessian officers demanded and obtained his removal from this position. Whereupon Dr. Wellford, stung by this gross injustice both to himself and the prisoners, spiritedly resigned from the British Army, and decided to make his friends and his home on American soil. Virginia and Fredericksburg became his choice through his friendship with Colonel John Spottswood, one of the prisoners whose life he had saved.

Dr. Wellford kept a diary which covered many years of his life and which unconsciously reveals him as a most interesting personality, and a man many years ahead of his time. Upon the death of Washington, who was his personal friend, Dr. Wellford expresses himself in open and no uncertain terms. He characterizes bleeding as a "dreadful practice" and Dr. Rush (the exponent of it) "as the source of incalculable mischief". And in his diary one reads as follows: "I have no hesitation in marking with my pen that I do seriously believe that General Washington did expire under the operation of that very practice of Dr. Rush, which I have on many occasions reprobated." Fancy the howl of controversy such statements brought forth! The cure of cures, the last word in medical achievement to be so ruthlessly assailed!

But we have traveled far afield from doorways. The front and the rear door of the house to which Dr. Wellford brought his bride—he married soon after coming to Virginia—are both modern editions and not in conformity with the interior doors, which bear the sign of the cross, or with the beautiful carved cornices and panelling of the rooms. The

very fact, however, of why the doors are modern lends added interest to the history of the house.

There is probably not in the town a building which suffered more than the old Wellford house during the bombardment and the battle of Fredericksburg. When the family (the grandchildren of Dr. Robt. Wellford) returned from the country where they had refuged during the battle, they found the old house a mere wreck of its former self. Thirty cannon balls had passed through its walls, and the doors with their shining brass locks and beautiful transoms had been burst from their hinges and splintered into kindling wood. Family portraits were cut from their frames and thrown upon the floor, and mirrors and much of the furniture and rare old china broken into bits. Windowless and doorless the old house stood, and apertures that let in the bitter wind were stuffed with United States Army blankets, picked up upon the battlefield.

Many of the priceless old things, however, were mended and preserved, and these together with the old garden at the rear of the house give an excellent picture of the leisurely and picturesque days before the War. And speaking of the garden one wonders what a city dweller, whose ears are attuned to ceaseless noise would think of a garden whose only sounds are the river washing against its farthest edge, and the song of the birds; where a friendly rabbit hops out of a moss-grown path to give you the right of way; and where dear old-fashioned flowers—strangers to modern gardens—bloom in generous and charming irregularity.

The owner of the home is Miss Eliza Roy, a direct descendent of the first Dr. Wellford.

The old green-house in the Wellford garden. Star-jasmine and climbing roses almost cover its tiny doorway.

Doorway to the residence portion of the National Bank, once the home of the brave and ill-starred Captain William Lewis Herndon.

The proportions and design of this doorway with its white facings, its fluted columns and its leaded top and side lights, bears out the statement that Fredericksburg's doorways reached the height of their beauty in the early part of the 19th Century.

The door is the entrance to the residence portion of the National Bank, which was built between 1820 and 1830 by Mr. Dabney Herndon; and in its lifetime this stately entrance has looked upon the comings and goings of many lovely women and famous men.

Anne Herndon, the daughter of the house married Matthew Fontaine Maury, recognized by all countries (save his own) as one of the world's greatest scientists. He is called the "Father of the Science of Meteorology," "Pathfinder of the Seas," and "Geographer of the Seas." Maury's deep sea soundings revealed the submarine plateau beneath the Atlantic Ocean, and his brain conceived the laying of the Atlantic Cable thereon. He was also the founder of the Naval Observatory.

From Cambridge University, England, Maury received the degree of Doctor of Laws, and Knighthood was conferred upon him, and medals given him by every country in Europe. Yet graduates of many of America's colleges have never heard his name!

The son of Dabney Herndon, Captain William Lewis Herndon was the first explorer of the Amazon River and published an account of his explorations in an interesting book. In 1857 Captain Herndon

Abraham Lincoln spoke from these steps in the Spring of 1862, at the time that McDowell's forces were holding the lines of the Rappahannock.

lost his life on his ship *The Central America.* Returning from Cuba to New York with 407 passengers, the ship sprung a leak. Captain Herndon ordered the women and children and as many men as safety demanded into the boats. Then the gallant officer dressed himself in his full uniform, and standing on the bridge with the United States flag in his hand, went down with his ship.

The daughter of Captain Lewis Herndon, Ellen, married President Arthur. Her exquisite voice, which Mr. Arthur heard in old St. John's Church in Washington, led him to ask for an introduction, and in the course of time she became his wife.

Another figure—Abraham Lincoln's—is connected with the doorways of the National Bank. The building fronts on two streets, Princess Anne and George, and the Princess Anne Street stone steps lead up to the doorway of the Bank proper. From these steps Lincoln made a speech in the Spring of 1862, at the time that McDowell's forces were holding the lines of the Rappahannock.

The bank at that time was the headquarters of General Marsena Patrick who, during his military occupation of the town, showed much kindness and consideration to the people of Fredericksburg. Many letters passed between Mayor Montgomery Slaughter—the War Mayor of the town—and General Patrick, and so courteous and formal were the communications that it has been said "they read like the extracts from the correspondence of diplomats."

Lincoln visited the encampment at the town in the Spring of 1862, and the Federal officers ex-

Porch to the old "Sentry Box" so named because during the Revolutionary War, the war of 1812, and the War between the States, sentries were posted in its upper story to watch the river, and give the alarm at the approach of enemy vessels.

pected official recognition of the presence of the United States' President, by the civil authorities. Mayor Slaughter, however, wrote a courteous but definite note, declining recognition of the visit on the ground "that he was the official head of a community almost unanimously in allegiance to, and in sympathy with the Confederate States."

The building is now owned by the stockholders of the National Bank.

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The Sentry Box

The old Sentry Box on Caroline Street, now the home of Mr. George W. Heflin, gets its name from the fact that the back of the house overlooks the river, and during three wars—the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the War Between the States, sentries were posted in the upper story of the buildng to watch for and give the alarm at the approach of enemy vessels.

It is not known when the house was built or by whom, but it is one of Fredericksburg's oldest houses, and at one time was owned jointly by General Weedon and General Hugh Mercer. These gentlemen married sisters. and at General Weedon's death the property was devised to his wife's nephew, Colonel Hugh Mercer.

The house has been modernized to some extent. Large four-paned window sashes have replaced the small panes of Colonial days, and the door is a late

Jefferson Davis as the guest of Mr. J. Temple Bennell in 1886 spoke to the people of the town from the steps of the porch

edition, but the porch supported by six slender columns and painstakingly carved attests its ripe old age.

From the garden door at the rear of the house there is an excellent view of the "Ferry Farm" just across the river from Fredericksburg, where George Washington's boyhood days were spent. It was from the shores of the Ferry Farm that the far-famed dollar was thrown, and on its grounds that the infant cherry tree succumbed. In the garden to the left of the Sentry Box are the remains of a secret underground passage whose existence has never been explained, but which evidently in days long past led to the river.

Many of the early presidents entered the porch and passed through the doorway to partake of the hospitality for which the "Sentry Box" was noted.

§

The Doswell House

The unusually handsome house of Mr. Alvin T. Rowe at the corner of Princess Anne and Lewis Streets, was built during the first quarter of the 19th Century by Mr. William F. Grey. The property, after changing hands several times, came back into the family of the builder when it was bought by Mr. J. Temple Doswell, who married Miss Evelyn Grey, granddaughter of William Grey.

The house is substantially built with long wide halls and large high-pitched rooms, and its entrance is a thing of genuine beauty. The floor of the porch

Entrance to "Brompton", the stately mansion that crowns Marye's Heights. Longstreet's headquarters during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

is laid in marble flag-stones, and a wrought iron enclosure extends to its roof. The door with its eight panels is framed by leaded top and sidelights.

In April, 1862, during the War Between the States, Jefferson Davis was the guest for a day, of Mr. Doswell, and on that occasion made a brief address to the people of the town from the steps of the porch. One wonders about that short impromptu speech—but the nature of it is not hard to reckon. That early in the conflict the Confederacy was far from a realization of the North's grim determination or its tremendous resources; and Mr. Davis, knowing the fighting qualities of the Southern men and sensing their powers of endurance—his blood perhaps quickened by the result of the first big battle of the war, felt no foreshadowing of the future—the banner of the South floated towards assured and glorious victory. And so we see the figure of Jefferson Davis—destined to be the most tragic of the Confederacy—standing slender and bare-headed in the April sunshine, with only words of confidence and high hope for the people gathered to hear him.

General Joseph E. Johnston was also a guest beneath Mr. Doswell's roof during the War Between the States.

§

Brompton

On the 13th of December, 1862, the date of the battle of Fredericksburg, nature assisted by military art had made of the then unknown Marye's

Heights, a position well nigh impregnable for the Confederate Army, whose second line of defense it was. To the west of Fredericksburg a range of hills extends for several miles, and on the crest of these hills Lee had placed his army in anticipation of the Federal attack. Marye's Hill being directly back of the town and the least steep and wooded of the elevations, the Confederates recognized it as the most assailable point on their left wing and fortified it accordingly.

A short time before the battle begun, General Longstreet spoke to General Alexander, his chief of artillery, in regard to a position for several idle guns, which he, Longstreet, had noticed while inspecting his battle lines.

"General, we cover that ground now so well that we will comb it as with a fine tooth comb. A chicken could not live on that field when we open fire upon it" was General Alexander's reply.

And so it proved. When the Right Grand Division of General Burnside's army, under General Sumner, moved forward across the plain to capture the heights, the Confederate guns on that coveted position turned loose their fire; and the Georgia regiments in the famous "Sunken Road", at the foot of the heights, joined their deadly rifle-fire to the cannon's roar. Infantry and artillery working in perfect concert to drive back those mighty columns of attack!

But on they came. From morning until evening, when the battle ended, they broke, wavered, rallied and pressed on—in all, fourteen separate and beautiful Federal charges. But Lee still held the heights.

Small wonder that the stars that night looked down on thousands of blue figures stretched still and prone upon the bloody plains of Fredericksburg.

And Brompton, the stately house that crowns the heights, stood through it all. This red brick mansion with its white trimmings and ivy covered wings, was built by Mr. John Lawrence Marye about 1830, and is now owned by the heirs of Captain M. B. Rowe. The architecture is rather unusual, in that the spacious hall extends across the house rather than through it, with the result that many of the large airy rooms look on to the garden at the rear of the house.

But the most interesting feature of Brompton is its entrance, the tall white-columned porch being typically Southern. The broad hospitable steps and the floor of the porch are of stone; its peaked roof is supported by Ionic columns; while the doorway is so similar in style to the doorway of the National Bank, that it is natural to conclude the same architect was responsible for both.

But while the beauty of the entrance to Brompton lies in the nobility and stateliness of its architectural lines, its interest lies in the fact that the footsteps of the Confederacy's greatest leaders have trod the stone floor of the porch and passed across the threshhold of the door—Lee, Jackson, Stuart, Longstreet, Pickett, Hood—in the days previous to that mighty conflict, Brompton knew them all.

The house and the white columns of the porch still bear the scars of shot and shell, but otherwise the cruel wounds of war have disappeared. The

trees once bullet-riddled and limbless, have put forth mightier and stronger limbs; the line of trenches near the gate are now soft grassy knolls; and little groups of woolly sheep (emblems of peace!) graze quietly across the hills.

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